

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

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FM AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8114

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

USMISSION USUN

USMISSION GENEVA

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PFOR, ECON, ETRD, :8, JO

SUBJECT: POSSIBLE ADDITIONAL RESTRAINTS ON IMPORTS

1. SUMMARY: WEST BANK IMPORTER HAS COMPLAINED OF NEW GOI REGULATIONS THAT HE CLAIMS WILL SEVERELY CURTAIL HIS IMPORTS FROM U.S. REGULATIONS WILL REPORTEDLY REQUIRE IMPORTS OF CERTAIN GOODS IN ONLY CERTAIN SPECIFIED QUANTITIES EXPRESSED IN METRIC SYSTEM. EMBASSY TEL AVIV IS CHECKING WITH GOI. END SUMMARY.

2. IN CONVERSATION WITH ECONOFF, MAJOR ZPST BANK PALESTINIAN IMPORTER OF U.S. MANUFACTURED CONVENIENCE PRODUCTS (BABY FOOD, CAKE MIXES, INSTANT COFFEE, DAIRY SUBSTITUTES, ETC.), COMPLAINED OF INCREASING RED TAPE AND RESTRICTIONS BEING IMPOSED BY GOVERNMENT OF ISRAELI (GOI) CUSTOMS DEPARTMENT.

3. AS EXAMPLE OF LATEST PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED, IMPORTER SAID WHEN HE HAD APPLIED FOR IMPORT LICENSE FOR INSTANT COFFEE IN LATE JUNE, HE HAD BEEN INFORMED BY CUSTOMS OFFICIAL IN HAIFA THAT LICENSE WOULD BE PDYA ONE APPROVED UNDER CURRENT REGU-
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LATIONS. (COMMENT: INTER ALIA, GOI IMPORT REGULATIONS

REQUIRE THAT PRODUCTS BE LABELED IN METRIC SYSTEM AND WITH IDENTITY OF IMPORTER IN HEBREW.) ACCORDING TO OFFICIAL, NEW REGULATIONS WILL REQUIRE THAT PRODUCTS BE IMPORTED ONLY, REPEAT ONLY, IN WEIGHTS SPECIFIED BY GOI, E.G., 100, 225, 300 GRAMS, ETC. THUS, PRODUCTS PACKAGED IN AVOIRDUPOIS MEASURES, THOUGH LABELED IN METRIC EQUIVALENTS, OR THOSE PACKAGED IN METRIC SYSTEM WHICH DO NOT MEET NEW SPECIFIC IMPORT STANDARDS, MAY NOT BE IMPORTED. IMPORTER COMMENTED THAT PROPOSED NEW REGULATIONS WOULD, IN EFFECT, PUT HIM OUT OF BUSINESS SINCE METRIC EQUIVALENTS OF AVOIRDUPOIS AND ENGLISH MEASURES COULD NEVER MEET THE NEW REQUIREMENTS, E.G. 4 OUNCES EQUALS 105.396 GRAMS AND NOT 100 GRAMS AS THE NEW REGULATIONS WOULD REQUIRE.

4. AFTER CONSIDERABLE DISCUSSION WITH CONTACTS IN CUSTOMS OFFICE, IMPORTER SAYS HE WAS TOLD IN CONFIDENCE THAT FORTHCOMING REGULATIONS WERE DESIGNED TO RESTRICT IMPORTS. GOI COULD NOT OFFICIALLY PROHIBIT IMPORTS IN FACE OF AGREEMENTS WITH EEC COUNTRIES AND U.S., HE WAS REPORTEDLY TOLD, BUT BY ESTABLISHING NEW AND SPECIFIC IMPORT CRITERIA, WHICH MOST MANUFACTURERS WOULD BE UNWILLING TO MEET TO SATISFY ISRAELI MARKET, GOI COULD ACHIEVE THE AIM WITHOUT APPEARING TO BE RESTRICTING COMMERCE.

5. COMMENT: WHILE ALLEGED GOI ACTION DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE DIRECTED SPECIFICALLY AGAINST U.S. PRODUCTS, IDR COMMENTS OF CUSTOMS OFFICIAL TRUE, U.S. PRODUCTS LIKELY SUFFER MOST SINCE THEY NOT PACKAGED UNDER METRIC SYSTEM. CONVERSELY, EUROPEAN MANUFACTURERS HAVE ADVANTAGE SINCE THEY ALREADY US METRIC SYSTEM; IT WOULD BE COMPARATIVELY EASY TO INCREASE OR REDUCE SIZE (WEIGHT) OF CURRENT PRODUCT TO MEET NEW GOI IMPORT CRITERIA. WE DOUBT THAT NEW REGULATIONS, IF PROMULGATED, WOULD AFFECT MAJOR PRODUCTS REQUIRED BY ISRAELI ECONOMY; BUT THEY COULD SEVERELY RESTRICT IMPORTS CONSIDERED TO BE NON-ESSENTIAL OR COMPETITIVE TO ISRAELI MANUFACTURED PRODUCTS. PERHAPS MOST SIGNIFICANT ASPECT OF CUSTOMS OFFICIAL'S COMMENTS, IF ALLEGATION TRUE, IS THAT PROPOSED NEW IMPORT REGULATIONS REFLECT DELIBERATE EFFORT BY GOI TO RESTRICT IMPORTS THROUGH CIRCUMVENTION OF INTERNATIONAL TRADE AGREEMENTS. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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WE HAVE DISCUSSED QUESTION WITH EMBASSY TEL AVIV, WHICH PLANS RAISE ISSUE WITH GOI MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY. JONE

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